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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON MIDDLE EAST

Summary

-- The lead story in all papers today, August 8, focuses on King Abdullah's visit to the region of Ma'an in the south of Jordan and the people's demonstration of "love and loyalty" for the King. All major front-page stories today focus on domestic issues, such as the government's decision to lift custom duties on sugar and the Prime Minister's encouragement of local industries to establish a sugar refinery in Jordan. Some papers highlight the New York Times article about the "secret" plan to start withdrawing U.S. troops from Iraq.

Editorial Commentary

-- "What comes after the end of the American reform project?"

Columnist Malek Athamneh writes on the op-ed page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (08/08): "The American project [for reform in the Middle East] was never really a project in that sense of the word. It did not have a real ideology that stems from a living reality and facts on the ground, but rather it was an echo of American illusions brought forth by American campaigning. The American project for reform is over, but what it has left behind is far from over. New developments in the region require a new vision with new ideas. The Americans, more than anyone, are not nave, and as such they must no doubt already be thinking of a new project with new foundations that would serve their interests. The important thing is that we, in our turn, must prepare for genuine reform projects. The failure of the American reform project does not mean that we do not need reform, and while reform is not an American objective in itself, it is a need imposed by the inevitability of the natural evolution of human societies.. Arab regimes have long been accused of being isolated from the reality of their societies, and they are required, for their own good, to bridge the gap that exists within these societies. This does not require American bridges. All it needs is for these regimes to extend a hand to their societies."

-- "John Bolton is America's gift to a world that is burning"

Columnist Lamis Andoni writes on the op-ed page of independent Arabic daily Al-Ghad (08/08): "The current analysis says that the U.S. foreign policy and not [John] Bolton's ideas will be the deciding factor in his performance as the U.S. representative to the United Nations. Yet, Bolton's ideas are not individual ideas, but rather spring from the neo-conservative institution that controls the Bush administration and that has given him the green light to implement his organized mission of destruction of international charters and agreements.. From the U.S. viewpoint, Bolton completed his previous tasks very successfully, since he achieved so much in the area of removing the obstacles and the hurdles that stood in the path of America's objective of preventing the arming of unfriendly countries while the United States liberated its allies from all constraints. The question that must be asked is why would America need such rudeness and aggressiveness against the United Nations and international institutions, particularly when these institutions have proven helpless in stopping any American project. The answer is not difficult. The U.S. strategy does not look at the present only, but also the far future. Removing all obstacles standing in the way of U.S. policy, particularly proving its solo role in the world, is part of its long-term strategy of preventing the rise of any other competitive power for decades to come."

In view of this strategy, the existence of the United Nations, even if it is under the control of the sole political and military superpower, as well as the continued presence of international charters, is viewed as available means that could be used by rising powers, foremost China, to challenge U.S. influence in the future.. If Bolton's appointment to the United Nations is America's message to the world of the process of officially terminating U.N. decisions and tasks, the message that is sent to the United Nations by way of the appointment is even more serious. This is because appointing an enemy of the United Nations to represent the United States therein, which essentially means a declaration of organized sabotage inside the United Nations, marks an unprecedented step to entrench the beliefs of extremist American right wing that considers the United Nations an enemy and a threat to the American identity."

HALE